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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR FEBRUARY 1, 2005

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for February 01, 2005. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

HURRIYET / MILLI GAZETE / ZAMAN / OZGUR GUNDEM / CUMHURIYET / EVRENSEL / VAKIT: As the bitter cold and heavy snowfall continue in many districts in eastern and southeastern Anatolia, the state road between Hakkari and Van was closed and many cars trapped due to three avalanches. Avalanche-clearing operations lasting three hours rescued the cars. The main road between Erzurum and Bingol has also been closed and road-clearing operations are being conducted, as weather permits. Hundreds of districts have been isolated due to snowfall on the roads, and electricity and telephone lines have been damaged. The Municipality of Mus requested compensation from the GoT to help cover the heavy expenses caused by winter conditions.

OZGUR GUNDEM / VAKIT: Experts claim that the Yenisehir district of Mardin, inhabited by 30,000 people, will be exposed to the threat of a landslide in the event of an earthquake there. After the earthquakes of Hakkari and Adana, the people of Yenisehir fear that an earthquake will hit their hometown, as there have been deep fractures in the earth in the vicinity. Meanwhile, according to Ozgur Gundem, the Deputy Chairperson of DEHAP (Democratic People's Party) and a group of attorneys affiliated with the Human Rights Center of Van's Bar Association paid a visit to Sutluce village of Hakkari, where an earthquake killed two people last week.

EVRENSEL: Arriving "too late" in Hakkari -- specifically one week after the earthquake -- was Mustafa Zeydan, AKP (Justice and Development Party) MP from Hakkari, who commented on last week's public unrest that arose after allegations of insufficient aid to the community. Zeydan attributed the incident to a small group inciting turmoil among people and disturbing the peace after the earthquake. When asked why he arrived so late in Hakkari, Zeydan said that he had been occupied with coordinating all kinds of assistance urgently needed by the disaster areas.

MILLI GAZETE: According to information obtained from the Gaziantep Security Director, the number of operations conducted against terrorist activities, compared to 2003 figures, declined notably by fifty per cent and terrorist activities dropped by twelve per cent within the province last year.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

1. MILLI GAZETE: Recent discussions on how to privatize the energy distribution networks seem to focus more on transferring the shares of operational rights, rather than the method of selling the assets to private sector investors. According to authorities at the Privatization Administration, the privatization process of at least one region should be completed by March or April. Privatization of the remaining regions should be completed by the end of 2006.

2. ZAMAN / OZGUR GUNDEM / EVRENSEL: In Iskenderun, many people demonstrated against the decision to privatize the port there. To protest the privatization process, the executive board members of Liman-Is (Union of Ports)-Iskenderun Branch and workers at the port carried banners reading, "Do not let the ports be sold" and "Ports bear strategic importance, we will not let them be sold".

3. BOLGE / EKSPRES / TURKIYE: The Ninth Administrative Court in Ankara has suspended the Privatization Administration's decision to shut down SEKA's (Turkish State Paper and Pulp Factory) facilities in Izmit. Nevertheless, 300 workers at SEKA's facilities in Mersin continued their expressions of their support for the Izmit workers and demands that SEKA be removed from the list of entities to be privatized.

4. HURRIYET (CUKUROVA) / MILLIYET: The Adana Branch of the Foundation for SMEs (Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises), Self-Employed People and Executive Officers will hold a meeting tomorrow (at Seyhan Hotel) in Adana to embark upon efforts that will establish and promote the links of Adana's SMEs with the rest of the world.

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